# **Southern Ndebele language**

Southern Ndebele (English: /ɛndəˈbiːliː/), also known as **Transvaal Ndebele**<sup>[1]</sup> or **South Ndebele**,<sup>[5]</sup>[6] is an African language belonging to the Nguni group of Bantu languages, spoken by the Ndebele people of South Africa.

There is also a different language called Northern Ndebele or isiNdebele, Matabele, or simply Ndebele, spoken in Zimbabwe, which is closer to Zulu.<sup>[7]</sup>

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#### **Overview**

### **Phonology**

Vowels

Consonants

Click consonants

#### Grammar

**Nouns** 

Verbs

### **Examples**

AmaNdebele in Zimbabwe

References

#### **External links**

Software

### **Overview**

The Southern Transvaal Ndebele people's history has been traced back to King Ndebele, King Ndebele fathered King Mkhalangana, King Mkhalangana fathered King Mntungwa (not to be confused with the Khumalo Mntungwa, because he was fathered by Mbulazi), King Mntungwa fathered King Jonono, King Jonono fathered King Nanasi, King Nanasi fathered King Mafana, king Mafana fathered King Mhlanga and Chief Libhoko, King Mhlanga fathered King Musi and Chief Skhube.

Ndebele – Some of his sons were left behind with the Hlubi

Mkhalangana - Some of his sons branched north and formed the Kalanga tribe

Souther	n Ndebele					
Transvaal Ndebele						
isiNdebel	e seSewula					
Native to	South Africa					
Region	Mpumalanga, Limpopo, Gauteng, North West					
Native speakers	1.1 million (2011 census) <sup>[1]</sup> 1.4 million L2 speakers (2002) <sup>[2]</sup>					
Language family	Niger-Congo					
	<ul><li>Atlantic–Congo</li></ul>					
	<ul><li>Volta-Congo</li></ul>					
	<ul><li>Benue–Congo</li></ul>					
	<ul><li>Bantoid</li></ul>					
	<ul><li>Southern Bantoid</li></ul>					
	■ Bantu					
	<ul><li>Southern Bantu</li></ul>					
	■ Nguni					
	<ul><li>Zunda</li></ul>					
	<ul><li>Southern Ndebele</li></ul>					
Writing system	Latin (Ndebele alphabet) Ndebele Braille					
Signed forms	Signed Ndebele					
Officia	al status					
Official language in	South Africa					
Language codes						
ISO 639-1	nr (https://www.loc. gov/standards/iso639 -2/php/langcodes_nam e.php?iso_639_1=nr) - South Ndebele					

Mntungwa – Founder of the amaNtungwa clan Njonono – He died in Jononoskop near Ladysmith – Surname Jonono is in the Hlubi tribe Nanasi – He died in Jononoskop near Ladysmith – Surname Nanasi is in the Hlubi tribe Mafana – He died in Randfontein (Emhlangeni) Mhlanga – He died in Randfontein (Emhlangeni) Musi – He died in kwaMnyamana (Pretoria)

King Musi's kraal was based at eMhlangeni a place named after his father Mhlanga, the name of the place is currently known as Randfontein (Mohlakeng) and later moved to KwaMnyamana which is now called Emarula or Bon Accord in Pretoria. King Musi was a polygamist and fathered the following sons, Skhosana (Masombuka),

Manala (Mbuduma), Ndzundza (Hlungwana), Thombeni (Kekana or Gegana), Sibasa, Mhwaduba (Lekhuleni) and Mphafuli and others.

Southern Transvaal Ndebele is one of the eleven official languages in the Republic of South Africa. The language is a Nguni or Zunda classification (UN) spoken mostly in the Mpumalanga Province, Gauteng, Limpopo and the Northwest.

The expression "isikhethu" can be loosely translated to mean 'the Southern Ndebele way of doing or saying'. Isikhethu means Southern Ndebele the same way that sikitsi will mean Swazi and se harona will mean Sotho. The language has been severely marginalised over the years. Until the formation of the apartheid Southern Ndebele <a href="https://honeland.com/honeland">honeland</a> (KwaNdebele), speaking the language publicly was discouraged. Most Southern Transvaal Ndebele speakers preferred Zulu especially because the latter was learned at school. Today the Southern Ndebele speakers, mostly those who are educated still prefer to use Southern Ndebele as home language for their children and will use Southern Ndebele as a language to communicate with other Southern Ndebele speakers.

	<pre>c.gov/standards/iso6 39-2/php/langcodes_n ame.php?code_ID=318) — South Ndebele</pre>
ISO 639-3	nb1 - South Ndebele
Glottolog	<pre>sout2808 (http://glo ttolog.org/resource/ languoid/id/sout280 8)<sup>[3]</sup></pre>
Guthrie code	S.407 <sup>[4]</sup>
Linguasphere	99-AUT-fi + 99-AUT- fj



Geographical distribution of isiNdebele in South Africa: proportion of the population that speaks isiNdebele at home

,	spe	aks isiNdebele	at h	iome.
		0-20%		60-80%
		20-40%		80–100%
		40-60%		

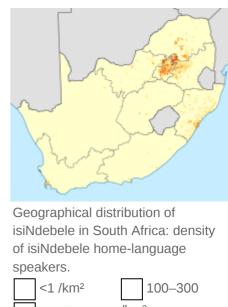
## **Phonology**

### **Vowels**

Southern Ndebele vowels

	Front	Back	
Close	i [i]	<b>u</b> [u]	
Mid	<b>e</b> [e~ε]	<b>o</b> [0~0]	
Open	<b>a</b> [a]		

#### **Consonants**



<1 /km²	100–300
1-3 /km²	/km²
3–10 /km²	300–1000
10–30 /km²	/km²
30–100	1000–3000 /km²
/km²	>3000 /km <sup>2</sup>



Bilingual sign in Afrikaans and Transvaal Ndebele at the Pretoria Art Museum

### Southern Ndebele consonants

		Bilabial	Labio- dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
	ejective	<b>p</b> [p']		<b>t</b> [t']		<b>k</b> [k']	
	aspirated	<b>ph</b> [pʰ]		th [tʰ]		kh [kʰ]	
Dissive	devoiced	<b>bh</b> [b̞]		<b>d</b> [d̞]		<b>g</b> [ģ]	
Plosive	prenasal	<b>mp</b> [mp]		nt [nt]		<b>nk</b> [ʰk']	
	prenasal (vd.)	<b>mb</b> [ <sup>m</sup> b]		nd [nd]		<b>ng</b> [ŋg]	
	implosive	[d] <b>d</b>					
	plain		<b>f</b> [f]	<b>s</b> [s]		rh [x]	
Fricative	voiced		<b>v</b> [v]	<b>z</b> [z]			<b>h</b> [ɦ]
Fricative	prenasal		<b>mf</b> [ <sup>ŋ</sup> f]				
	prenasal (vd.)		<b>mv</b> ["∨]				
Nasa	I	<b>m</b> [m]		<b>n</b> [n]	<b>ny</b> [ɲ]	<b>ngh</b> [ŋ]	
	plain			hl [ <del>1</del> ]			
Lateral Fricative	voiced			<b>dl</b> [焓]			
	aspirated			dlh [ង្រʰ]			
Rhotic				<b>r</b> [r]			
Lateral Approximant				I [I]			
Approxir	nant	<b>w</b> [w]			у [ј]		

### Affricates

			Alveolar	Post- alveolar	Velar
	voiceless	ejective	<b>ts</b> [ts']	<b>tj</b> [t∫′]	kg [kx']
Affricate		aspirated	tsh [tsh]	<b>tjh</b> [t∫ʰ]	kgh [kxʰ]
		lateral	<b>ti</b> [tł']		
		lateral (asp.)	tlh [tłh]		
		plain	dz [dz]		
		devoiced		<b>j</b> [d͡3]	
		prenasal		<b>nj</b> [ɲdʒ]	

### **Click consonants**

#### Southern Ndebele clicks

			Dental	Post- alveolar	Lateral
		plain	<b>c</b> [l]	<b>q</b> [!]	<b>x</b> [II]
	voiceless	aspirated	<b>ch</b> [  h]	<b>qh</b> [!ʰ]	
Plosive		nasalized	nc [ŋ  ]		<b>nx</b> [ŋ  ]
	voiced	plain	<b>gc</b> [  g]	<b>gd</b> [¡a]	
		nasalized		ngq [n!a]	

### Grammar

#### **Nouns**

The Southern Ndebele noun consists of two essential parts, the prefix and the stem. Using the prefixes, nouns can be grouped into noun classes, which are numbered consecutively, to ease comparison with other Bantu languages.

The following table gives an overview of Southern Ndebele noun classes, arranged according to singularplural pairs.

Class	Singular	Plural
1/2	um(u)- <sup>1</sup>	aba-, abe-
1a/2a	u-	abo-
3/4	um(u)- <sup>1</sup>	imi-
5/6	i-, ili-, ilu-	ama-
7/8	is(i)-	iz(i)-, iiN-
9/10	iN-	iiN-
14	ubu-, ub-, utj-	
15	uku-	
17	uku-	

 $<sup>^{1}</sup>$  umu- replaces um- before monosyllabic stems, e. g. <a href="mailto:umu-tu">umu-tu</a> (person).

### **Verbs**

Verbs use the following affixes for the subject and the object:

Person/ Class	Prefix	Infix
1st sing.	ngi-	-ngi-
2nd sing.	u-	-wu-
1st plur.	si-	-si-
2nd plur.	ni-	-ni-
1	u-	-m(u)-
2	ba-	-ba-
3	u-	-m(u)-
4	j-	-yi-
5	li-	-li-
6	a-	-wa-
7	si-	-si-
8	zi-	-zi-
9	j-	-yi-
10	zi-	-zi-
14	bu-	-bu-
15	ku-	-ku-
17	ku-	-ku-
reflexive		-zi-

# **Examples**

### **Months in Southern Ndebele**

English	Northern Ndebele (Zimbabwe)	Southern Ndebele (South Africa)	Zulu (South Africa)
January	uZibandlela	uTjhirhweni	uMasingane
February	uNhlolanja	uMhlolanja	uNhlolanja
March	uMbimbitho	uNtaka	uNdasa
April	uMabasa	uSihlabantangana	UMbasa
May	uNkwekwezi	uMrhayili	UNhlaba
June	uNhlangula	uMgwengweni	UNhlangulana
July	uNtulikazi	uVelabahlinze	uNtulikazi
August	uNcwabakazi	uRhoboyi	UNcwaba
September	uMpandula	uKhukhulamungu	uMandulo
October	uMfumfu	uSewula	uMfumfu
November	uLwezi	uSinyikhaba	uLwezi
December	uMpalakazi	uNobayeni	uZibandlela

### AmaNdebele in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwean Ndebele is part of the Nguni cluster and is therefore very similar to other Nguni languages (such as Zulu, Xhosa and Swati) with which it shares a high level of mutual intelligibility. However, it has (to some extent) also been influenced by other Non-Nguni Zimbabwean languages (e.g. Shona). The South African (or Southern Transvaal Ndebele), while maintaining its Nguni roots, has been influenced by the Sotho languages. [8]

### References

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- 3. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Sumayela Ndebele" (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/sout2808). Glottolog 3.0. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
- 4. Jouni Filip Maho, 2009. New Updated Guthrie List Online (https://web.archive.org/web/201802 03191542/http://goto.glocalnet.net/mahopapers/nuglonline.pdf)
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- 8. Skhosana, P.B. (2010) The Linguistic Relationship between Southern and Northern Ndebele, University of Pretoria, DLitt Thesis

### **External links**

■ List links to Ndebele language resources (http://www.mongabay.com/indigenous\_ethnicities/languages/languages/Ndebele.html)

### **Software**

- Spell checker for OpenOffice.org and Mozilla (https://web.archive.org/web/20070114015602/http://translate.org.za/content/view/1610/54/), OpenOffice.org (https://web.archive.org/web/20070324112647/http://translate.org.za/content/view/17/32/), Mozilla Firefox web-browser (https://web.archive.org/web/20070210160756/http://translate.org.za/content/view/1611/54/), and Mozilla Thunderbird email program (https://web.archive.org/web/20070324203655/http://translate.org.za/content/view/1612/54/) in Ndebele
- Project to translate Free and Open Source Software into Ndebele (http://translate.org.za/)

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